

**Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Sanford Bishop**

May 16, 2012

*-As Prepared For Delivery-*

"Thank you for yielding. Mr. Chairman as you know, the allocation for the FY 2013 Milcon/VA bill is flat. In my opinion the allocation is what we could have expected if the Republicans would have stuck to the bipartisan agreement that established \$1.047 trillion as the Committee's allocation.

"As I said in subcommittee I strongly disagree with the path Majority has chosen to take and I just want to point out that the \$1.028 allocation puts House Republicans at odds with House Democrats, the White House, Senate Democrats, and Senate Republicans.

"I believe the lower allocation does nothing but slow down the appropriations process and if it stands, will stall economic growth and impede job creation.

"With that being said, I would like to thank Chairman Culberson as well as the subcommittee members for all of their hard work on the bill.

"Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that the subcommittee recommendation includes \$546 million for the construction or replacement of 10 Department of Defense Education Activity Schools (DODEA).

"I believe that providing the funds for DODEA schools will not only help our servicemembers children get a quality education in safe facility, it will also give our servicemembers one less thing to worry about.

"Mr. Chairman, I am also pleased that the subcommittee recommendation includes \$127 million for the second increment of the medical center replacement in Landstuhl.

"Overall for Milcon, I think our job was a little easier this year because the FY 2013 Milcon budget request reflects the current budget climate, the end of 'Grow the Force' requirements, and an overall strategy to place resources in other places.

"Now while the request was lower-much lower- than the FY 2012 enacted level the Department believes that this level of funding will not hamper the Services' construction programs.

"However, I still believe that this committee must stay engaged because although we have made substantial gains in facilities and quality of life initiatives a lot of work still remains.

"Mr. Chairman, moving to the Veterans Affairs title, I must say that I am pleased that the bill meets the discretionary budget request in all areas of administrative expenses, research, medical care, information technology, and facilities.

"Mr. Chairman, I would like to note that I agree with the bill language that fences off funding for the DOD/VA integrated health record IT initiative until the two Departments meet certain steps.

"I believe this language will motivate the DOD and VA to move faster to get this program up and running. Furthermore, after the story you shared with us at subcommittee I believe that making sure this endeavor is completed and functioning should be our top priority.

"In fact, I believe that if this Committee can get the Department of Defense and the Department of Veteran Affairs on the same page we will finally see some progress on the VA claims backlog.

"Mr. Chairman, I also agree with the changes to the VA construction accounts that change the period of availability from no year money to five year money. This change brings the VA in line with all of the other federal agencies and hopefully will speed up the process.

"Finally, Mr. Chairman I am very pleased that Chairman Culberson was inclusive and chose to craft a clean bill.

"I believe that the bill before us today has done a lot of responsible things and if this bill remains intact and absent of policy riders that we will be able to report out a bill with strong bipartisan support.

"One last thing I would really like to thank the staff for working so hard to get us to this point, however we still have a long way to go.

"Thank you Mr. Chairman and I yield back."